

against Scott's family because of his condition. If they are unhappy with the private insurance, they will have the choice to purchase high-quality public insurance for the whole family. Regardless, their deductible and monthly premiums will be much lower. For the first time, they will not have to worry about Scott's preexisting condition, and they can stop rationing their health care. They will be able to take advantage of preventive care so they can catch potential problems earlier and minimize their chances of getting really sick.

This is what reform with a public option would mean for Scott and Cindy, and for millions of Americans just like them in Illinois and across the country. That is why I will not compromise on the public option. I will repeat that: I will not compromise on the public option because Deborah, Scott, and Cindy need our help. That is why I will not settle for anything less than the real reform the American people deserve. The human cost is too high.

As we move forward, it is important to consider all sides of this contentious debate. But this debate has been going on for nearly a century. Since the days of Teddy Roosevelt, we have been trying to come together and solve this problem. The time for debate is drawing to a close. The time for bold action is upon us now, and our path is clear. The only way to achieve meaningful health care reform and bring costs down is through a public option that creates real competition in the system.

Let me be clear on this—I will be very clear—I will not vote for any health care bill that does not include a public option. I urge my colleagues to join with me, to stand on the side of the American people, and to fight for ordinary folks such as Deborah, Scott, and Cindy, and their families.

We must not delay. We must not let them down.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURRIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KAUFMAN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN POLICY

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to support the comprehensive review of our Afghanistan policy being conducted by the Obama administration. This is the right time for such a review because conditions have changed since the President's strategy was announced on March 27. I have traveled to the region twice since then—first in April and again last

month—and can confirm the recent observations of General McChrystal that the Taliban has made inroads in Afghanistan and the situation is deteriorating and serious. At the same time, political dynamics have changed in the region. There have been flawed elections in Afghanistan, and an emboldened Pakistani military has taken actions against elements in the Taliban in Pakistan. In light of these developments, we must give the President the time he needs to review the strategy and reevaluate the mission.

Today marks 8 years since the U.S. military entered Afghanistan, but if there is one message I hope to convey to the American people today, it is that we have not been there in earnest since 2003. After launching a successful NATO campaign against al-Qaida and the Taliban-led government that sheltered it, resources were diverted to Iraq in 2003 before the job was finished. We essentially left Afghanistan to invade Iraq, and the result in Afghanistan was a resurgent Taliban and failure to capture Osama bin Laden.

This was not the first time we left Afghanistan. After resourcing the Afghans throughout the 1980s in their efforts to beat the Soviets, we abruptly ended our support in 1989 after Soviet troops withdrew. We were then absent for 12 years until 9/11.

Historically, and especially since 2003, our commitment to Afghanistan has been wavering and halfhearted. This has created a deficit of trust in the minds of the Afghans, especially among those who have allied with us and faced the prospect of life or death in our absence. I wish to repeat that. This has created a deficit of trust in the minds of Afghans, especially among those who have allied with us and faced the prospect of life or death in our absence.

As we enter the ninth year of the war, it is critical to reassess our strategy so we can get it right. This is why the President's review must be complete and must be comprehensive. It is not just about combat troops or the McChrystal report. Troops are just one part of the puzzle and the report submitted by General McChrystal is just one input. The President must consider multiple perspectives on the political and regional situation from U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson, and the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke. He must also weigh broader concerns from the Department of Defense, including overall force structure and other global military requirements. The review will take time. There are many complex issues to deal with in Afghanistan which closely relate to our policy in Pakistan.

The President will present his plan to the American people when he has made his decision. At that time, Congress will be an important part of the process and will hold hearings on the Presi-

dent's plan, as it did with the President's plans in Iraq. Then each Member of Congress will cast the most important vote for any Member of this body: whether to send additional troops abroad and how to protect them. That debate should not be about politics.

I believe we must look at this challenge as a sum of the parts, and I wish to raise two primary questions. The first is about our mission and our objectives, which have been complicated by changes on the ground since March. The second is about waging an effective counterinsurgency strategy and what it would take to meet those requirements in Afghanistan. After we review our mission strategy in Afghanistan, we must also review how it correlates to our strategy in Pakistan. I will take each one of these questions in turn, both to give an indication of the complexity of the decisionmaking process and to share my observations on each subsidiary question.

First, the President must ask: What are our missions and objectives? In March, he presented his mission statement:

To dismantle, disrupt, and defeat al-Qaida and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent the return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

He also laid out key objectives: promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan, developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can take the lead in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, and assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable government in Pakistan.

As I have said, since March there have been at least three specific changes to the situation.

First, there were flawed Presidential elections in August which have further eroded confidence between the Afghan people and the government.

When I was in Afghanistan in April, there was hope—real hope—that these elections would lead to real change and progress. Unfortunately, the outcome has been a worst-case scenario, validating the fears of those who view the Afghan Government as plagued by corruption. As each day passes, the steady stream of election fraud revealed in the media further undermines trust in the Karzai government. This is especially harmful to our overall counterinsurgency strategy because the goal is to build support among the Afghan people for their government. Remember, this is not—not—between us and the Taliban, it is between the Afghans and the Taliban, and the perception of government corruption only strengthens the Taliban.

Second, we must review the challenges of training the Afghan national security forces.

While the Afghan National Army has demonstrated an ability to fight, there are serious questions about its size and effectiveness, and problems are even